

Istook Urges Court to Uphold Pledge as Constitutional

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK) urged the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold the constitutionality of the Pledge of Allegiance as it hears oral arguments today in an appeal of the 9th Circuit court decision which ruled the words “under God” to be a violation of the first amendment. Istook has previously filed an amicus brief in the case defending the pledge’s constitutionality.

“Over 50 years ago, before ‘under God’ was added to the text, the U.S. Supreme Court said schoolchildren are free either to say the Pledge of Allegiance or not to say it,” said Istook. **“That’s the standard we should still follow. It’s also the standard we should follow regarding prayer by those students.**

“Sure, some people are intolerant; they object to hearing God mentioned at a school or public place, but that doesn’t give them the right to censor the rest of us. This ruling shows just how out-of-touch too many judges are, and how they’ve turned common-sense upside-down. Don’t mandate prayer or religious messages, but for heaven’s sake don’t ban them either!”

Istook is also the author of the Pledge and Prayer Amendment, HJR 46. The proposed constitutional amendment has over 100 cosponsors and would allow prayer in schools, the recitation of the pledge of allegiance, and other expressions of religious freedom on public property. The language reads:

“To secure the people’s right to acknowledge God according to the dictates of conscience:

--The people retain the right to pray and to recognize their religious beliefs, heritage, and traditions on public property, including schools.

--The United States and the States shall not establish any official religion nor require any person to join in prayer or religious activity.”

The recent 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals decision overturned a 1954 act of Congress inserting the phrase "under God" after the words "one nation" in the pledge. The court said the phrase violates the so-called Establishment Clause in the Constitution that requires a separation of church and state. In October, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to review that decision.